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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: GOT LAYS ANNAPOLIS MARKER WITH PERES, ABBAS
ADDRESSES

REF: A. ANKARA 2734

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2779

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: As the first Israeli leader ever to speak before a predominantly Muslim parliament, President Shimon Peres joined Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in addressing the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November [1](#)13. In consecutive speeches, the two leaders expressed their expectations for Annapolis. Peres, the statesman, praised Turkey's contributions to a lasting peace through economic programs, adding that "Turkey will be a partner in Annapolis." Abbas, a bit less eloquent, complained of the Palestinian situation but also acknowledged Turkey would play an effective role in finding a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Given the GOT's success in bringing together the two leaders in what commentators in Ankara coined a "dress rehearsal for Annapolis," Turkish media have begun to speculate on whether Turkey will receive an invitation. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In what the Turkish press is heralding as a "dress rehearsal for Annapolis," Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas consecutively addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) on November 13. In doing so, Peres thus became the first Israeli leader to speak before a predominantly Muslim parliament. MFA Israel/Palestine desk officer Murat Omeroglu told us the GOT intentionally scheduled the concurrent bilateral visits to complement ongoing U.S. and others' efforts prior to the Middle East peace process (MEPP) meeting (ref A). Each leader spoke for just over 15 minutes. During their addresses, both Peres and Abbas underscored the importance of Annapolis and thanked the U.S. for its role. Reflecting views also expressed by Peres, Abbas cautioned that the meeting is a rare opportunity that could "bear dangerous conclusions" if not taken seriously.

"I WANT TO LIVE WITH MY NEIGHBORS IN PEACE"

[1](#)3. (SBU) Peres praised Turkey's contributions to regional peace and condemnation of terror. Turkish programs such as the private sector-led Ankara Forum help to normalize Palestinian lives (ref b). Peres underscored the importance

of democracy in developing a lasting peace and voiced support for a two-state system, adding "only a democratic Palestinian state living in harmony with a democratic Israeli state can end hostilities." He concluded his remarks by reciting a famous Turkish poem that struck a particularly strong cord with his Turkish audience - "I want to live with my neighbors in peace."

"OUR EFFORT IS PART OF OUR STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY"

¶4. (SBU) Like Peres, Abbas emphasized the importance of establishing a democratic Palestine. Some in Palestine, he noted, do not support efforts to create peace through rule of law and have compromised democracy by resorting to violence. Abbas applauded Turkey as a "stronghold of democracy" and an example for Palestine. Turkey will play an effective role in finding a solution to the disputes between Israel and Palestine as well as Israel and the Arab world. However, Abbas asserted, international sanctions have hindered Palestine from following in Turkey's democratic footsteps. He cautioned that efforts to "make Palestine bow to pressure and accept the status quo" will not produce results. There will be no Palestinian state seated in a capital other than East Jerusalem.

¶5. (SBU) The two leaders' reception fell flat in a parliament not accustomed to having foreign leaders address it (then-President Clinton did so in 1999; precedents are few and far between.) If anything, Peres' statesman-like approach and well crafted speech was slightly better received. But applause was brief in both cases, as if the MPs were unsure - and lacked instructions from their party leaders - on how to react.

A SEAT AT THE ANNAPOLIS TABLE

¶6. (SBU) The Turkish media celebrated the visits as a monumental step forward for the MEPP. In a November 11 interview with CNN Turk, Peres stated "For the first time in history, a majority Muslim country has emerged as a mediator which all parties can accept." Given Peres and Abbas comments, the press here has begun to speculate on whether Turkey will receive an invitation to Annapolis. "Milliyet" contended that just inviting Turkey will not be enough. Turkey wants to join Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan in becoming the fourth regional actor working with the Quartet.

¶7. (C) Comment: As reflected in the media, the GOT believes it has notably contributed to the MEPP by bringing Peres and Abbas together prior to Annapolis. Having demonstrated its abilities as a facilitator, Turkey is angling for and has high expectations for a seat at the table there. But the main point that often gets lost in the "Turkey first" media focus here, is that something remarkable happened in Ankara on November 13: An Israeli head of state spoke to the parliament of a majority Muslim state. In addition, with President Gul as the facilitator, Peres and Abbas took the same stage, conveyed many similar messages, shook hands several times without duress, and seemed genuinely to understand the imperative of moving forward. End Comment.

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